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Two More Years of War: Should America Do It?

This country's two top intelligence organizations, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, have concluded that North Vietnam can continue the war for two years at the current level of fighting.

The agencies also estimated that had American bombing, carried on intensely recently, not been resumed, Hanoi's offensive efforts could have been doubled.

Those estimates, supposedly the best available to the U. S., fit into current history to pose a question that hangs over the current presidential campaign: Will American bombers still be there two years hence and will American air and sea forces remain engaged there at that time?

Clark Clifford, former Defense secretary, wrote (Foreign Affairs, July 1969), of His agonizing effort to find solid answers about the war from the experts.

He found the intelligence and military experts agreed that Hanoi could and probably would respond to the proposal at that time to send 200,000 more American troops to Vietnam.

Troop strength at that time was 525,000 Americans.

He found bombing could "never by itself" stop the war. "We had already dropped a heavier tonnage of bombs than in all the theaters of World War II."

When Clifford asked the experts how long it would take to end the war, "There was no agreement on an answer. Not only was there no agreement, I could find nobody willing to express any confidence in his guesses."

The war was being fought then as now under political guidelines that restricts the operations. Therefore, the political, not the military, questions are paramount.

America's political reasons for being there, at least in the eyes of the public, have changed. President Thieu virtually eliminated any reason for our being there by declaring democracy and freedom to be foreign to his concept of governing. Indeed, the Vietnamese culture seems unready to accept our kind of system, at all.

Clifford concluded that South Vietnam lacked the will to win the war and said, "If they lack a sense or a sufficiency of national purpose, we can never force it on them."

Therefore, even continuing American support for two more years, along with Thieu's view of the necessity of dictatorial rule, should we do it?

Quite obviously, President Nixon is trying to negotiate an end to the fighting. If Hanoi can hold out two years or more, past performance suggests that we should assume she will hold out. Do we, then, have no other option than to slug it out to the bitter end? The President will have to answer that question sooner or later, and he should. It's an urgent national question.

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Continued futility of the air war

In early 1969, a National Security Council study on the Vietnam War gave President Nixon sound advice on the futility of bombing North Vietnam. The summary prepared at that time by national security adviser Henry Kissinger sounds little different from current analyses by the Defense Intelligence Agency and Central Intelligence Agency. One therefore asks why Mr. Nixon follows a war policy that seems at odds with conclusions both four years ago and now.

The rationale presented by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1969, and by the U.S. command in Saigon, was that previous bombing in the North was effective: It destroyed large amounts of military supplies and vehicles. But Kissinger's summary of intelligence-agency findings told another story:

"Enemy needs in South Vietnam—10 to 15 trucks of supplies per day (carrying 30 to 50 tons total) — are so small and his supply of war material so huge that the enemy can replace his losses easily, increase his traffic flows slightly and get through as

much supplies to South Vietnam as he wants to in spite of the bombing."

That was a 1969 review of the 1965-68 bombing, substantiated by North Vietnam's ability to increase military strength and military activity in the South during that period more rapidly than the drastic increase in American bombing. The 1972 intelligence studies show that the heavy bombing of the North that began last April has been successful in the same sense as before: Targets have been hit, and great damage has been done. And, as before, the studies show that men and supplies continue to move south. The current flow is said to be adequate to permit Hanoi to continue fighting "at the present rate" for the next two years.

On the basis of his past statements, we presume that President Nixon's response to that pessimistic forecast would be to continue the bombing, however "effective," for longer than two years. As before, we consider that an unsatisfactory policy.

WASHINGTON POST

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Hanoi Plans Drive Before U.S. Election

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

North Vietnam is continuing to prepare new military offensives in South Vietnam for the peak of the American election campaign, as a counterpart to secret negotiations in Paris, according to U.S. intelligence estimates.

Administration sources acknowledged yesterday that, as one put it, "a familiar pattern appears to be developing—more talk, and more fighting."

The return of North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho to Paris for new talks is paralleled by accumulating evidence that Hanoi seeks to support its bargaining position with a new surge of greater military strength in South Vietnam. The projected period for the intended action, administration sources said, continues to appear to be late September or early October.

The accumulating information suggests to U.S. specialists that North Vietnam has the following military and psychological objectives, so far as the United States is concerned:

- To show that North Vietnam cannot be bombed out of the war, or as North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Don defiantly stated on Sept. 2, it cannot be bombed back "to the Stone Age as the Pentagon ringleaders dreamed."

- To provide Hanoi's negotiators with reinforcing military operations in South Vietnam, as bargaining in Paris continues through the American election campaign.

- Perhaps above all, to force the Vietnam war back into American public consciousness and demolish the impression the Nixon administration seeks to create that the war is all but over for Americans. The planned release of three American pilots by North

Vietnam is intended to help fulfill the same objective.

The Nixon administration, in turn, is determined to do its utmost to avoid "negative" news about the war during this period, informed sources privately concede.

The White House was reported highly irritated yesterday by the latest published report stating that American intelligence concluded last month that North Vietnam can continue fighting at the present level for two more years, despite constant, heavy American bombing.

Administration sources privately acknowledged the substance of these reports, submitted by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency to the National Security Council. They refused to discuss the reports publicly.

A similar report was first published on Aug. 25, attributed to high-level U.S. Air Force officials. That report said that despite the American bombing and the mining of North Vietnam ports, North Vietnam was continuing to receive 25 per cent or more of its normal flow of supplies through makeshift techniques; and that U.S. bombing might still be required for two or three more years.

President Nixon on Aug. 29 indignantly labeled a projection of American bombing for that length of time as "quite ridiculous," but he abided stating any time period of his own.

Administration officials, however, acknowledged yesterday that they still cannot place any "fixed percentage" on the amount of military supplies cut off to North Vietnam, partially because Hanoi's lead-

ership constantly is seeking methods to circumvent the interrupted flow. "We know we are hurting them, and that we have blunted their offensive," said one official, "but we never anticipated a major effect until later in the fall or the winter."

As a result, North Vietnam has been able to resupply its forces in the field, and replace part of its losses, with an estimated 20,000 fresh troops sent into the northern portion of South Vietnam last month.

The anticipated upsurge of North Vietnamese and Vietcong military activity is projected for about a month, U.S. sources said, according to collected intelligence on enemy plans. "It is bound to be as spectacular as they can make it," said one U.S. source, but administration officials generally express confidence that no "major breakthrough" by the Communists is probable.

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